

## The Persecution of the Church 33

them to regard flight from danger as culpable wake-ness. They not only did not encourage but strictly forbade the overthrowing of pagan statues or altars by zealous Christians anxious to testify to their faith. They did not wish, that is to say, to provoke certain reprisals. Yet, in spite of all their efforts, martyrdom was constantly courted by rash and excitable natures in the frenzy of religious fanaticism, like that which impelled Theodoras of Amasia in Pontus to set fire to a temple of Cybele in the middle of the city and then boast openly of the deed. Often, however, such martyrs were mere children. Such was Eulalia of Merida, a girl of twelve, whose parents, suspecting her intention, had taken her into the country to be out of harm's way. She escaped their vigilance, returned to the city, and, standing before the tribunal of the judge, proclaimed herself a Christian.

" *Mane superba  
tribunal adit,  
Fascibus ads tat et  
in mediis.* "

The judge, instead of bidding the officials remove the child, began to argue with her, and the argument ended in Eulalia spitting in his face and overturning the statue which had been brought for her to worship. Then came torture and the stake, a martyred saint, and in later centuries a stately church, flower festivals, and a charming poem from the Christian poet, Prudentius. But even his graceful verses do not reconcile us to the pitiful futility of such child-martyrdom as that of Eulalia of Merida or Agnes of Rome.